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October 26, 2017

The Honorable Ty Gray
Director
Arizona Game and Fish Department
5000 W. Carefree Highway
Phoenix, Arizona 85086

Dear Director Gray:

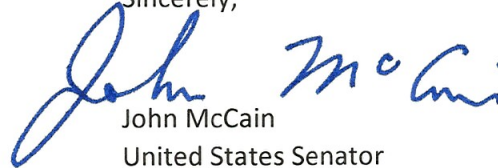
I write to encourage the Arizona Game and Fish Department to increase its support for the Mount Graham red squirrel recovery effort. I believe the Department's *Heritage Fund* could be utilized to develop a more robust captive breeding program.

As you know, the red squirrel population on Mt. Graham has rapidly declined in recent months largely because of this summer's Frye Fire. Only 35 squirrels remain in the wild following substantial loss of their habitat and food supply. The survival of the subspecies may ultimately depend on the release of captive bred animals into forested habitats.

To that end, I respectfully request that you review the program needs of the Arizona Center for Nature Conservation, which operates the Phoenix Zoo. Under its collaborative agreement with the Department, the U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Zoo currently holds and studies five squirrels. I understand that the Zoo's program would benefit from the addition of squirrel enclosures for 10 more squirrels, a dedicated technician to conduct reproduction assessments, and related research equipment.

The Department has long been a leader in protecting the red squirrel in the face of forest insect infestation and damaging wildfires. I am confident that your continued support will greatly improve the chances of survival for this Mount Graham subspecies. Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,



John McCain
United States Senator